



News Release

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Risk of West Nile Virus Up for This Holiday Weekend *From Dusk Through Dawn – Put Your DEET On!*

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The wet and stormy weather prediction for Memorial Day weekend is perfect for mosquitoes! According to the Salt Lake City Mosquito Abatement District (SLMAD), the warm, wet April started the Utah mosquito season earlier than usual. With the combination of the warm, wet spring and the higher number of mosquitoes than anticipated, the risk for getting a mosquito bite is high. Because Utahns are heading outdoors in large numbers for the holiday weekend, the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is urging Utahns to Fight the Bite!

“Currently, the number of mosquitoes that we’re seeing would be normal for the middle of June,” said Sam Dickson, Manager, SLMAD. This means that outdoor activities for this holiday weekend should include wearing mosquito repellent with DEET and covering up from dusk through dawn.

The Memorial Day holiday weekend marks the time when most Utahns begin spending more time outside. This weekend many Utahns will head to newly opened pools, campgrounds and amusement parks and enjoy outdoor activities and barbecues. As Utahns spend more time outdoors the risk of getting mosquito bites increases, therefore increasing the risk of West Nile virus (WNV) infection.

Many people will be looking at this weekend’s weather prediction and planning on using raincoats and umbrellas. Unfortunately, this is the weather that excites mosquitoes. Gary Hatch of the Davis Mosquito Abatement District, advises that temperatures over 50

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degrees, along with threatening weather (such as thunderstorms rolling into the valley), makes mosquitoes very active and raise the risk of biting. “Many people think that cold stormy weather kills mosquitoes, but that isn’t true,” explains Hatch. “Mosquitoes thrive and are actively biting in temperatures over 50 degrees. While mosquitoes don’t bite during rainstorms, their biting activity increases when storms are approaching.” This weekend’s weather is expected to be perfect for mosquitoes!

“While people ages 50 and over are more at risk for severe disease and death, people of all ages are at risk for West Nile infection,” said Robert Rolfs, M.D., State Epidemiologist, UDOH. “Prevention steps are simple, so make sure to plan ahead when heading outdoors.” The best protection from WNV comes from a mosquito repellent that contains DEET and covering up with long sleeves and pants from dusk through dawn.

“WNV has not been detected this year, but we know that the infection survives in winter mosquitoes,” said Michelle Korth, epidemiologist, UDOH. In Utah in 2004, seven horses, four mosquito pools and 10 birds were tested and all tests were negative. The closest 2004 detection to Utah is in Arizona where WNV was detected in mosquitoes and horses.

For more information, see the attached WNV Fact Sheet or visit the UDOH website at www.health.utah.gov/wnv.

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